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THE UNIFICATION CHURCH -- BLESSING OR MONSTER?

PART III

by Lee Seaman

(This is the third in a series on the Unification Church. This week the author looks at recruiting practices and the daily life of movement members. ---eds.)

Three million members and associate members worldwide, the Clean-cut Young Man near Shibuya Station told me. Nearly one million, say other sources. Where do all these people come from? And what do they find within the Unification Church?

"Potential converts come to the sect largely from the ranks of disaffected young people, and there is no shortage of those. They exist all over the country, chafing under an unhappy lifestyle and looking for meaningful purpose in life," writes John D. Marks ("From Korea with Love," the *Washington Monthly*, February 1974.)

Marks referred to the United States, but his observations apply equally well to Japan. Left and right here agree on one point -- Japan has no soul. Materialistic concerns dominate society. Parents urge their children to "succeed." This means to study hard -- often from kindergarten -- to earn admission to a top university, thus guaranteeing status and high salary in a prestigious Japanese company.

And students *do* study hard. They stay up all night, turn ghostly pale during the fateful exam month, and spend two or more years in grueling prep schools to gain entrance to the university of their choice.

Once in college, the pressure clicks off. Students find themselves suddenly free--to play mahjong, to frequent coffee shops, to paint their helmets and join the radical student movement of their choice. Some even study, but university classes are large and teachers often remote and uninspiring. In this atmosphere, many students begin a search for meaning, something to give their lives to.

The Unification Church offers total commitment. Full-time members live in communal groups, around twenty people to a house. They pool material possessions, including their paychecks if they work outside. The movement provides clothing and food plus a minimum of pocket money, perhaps ¥5000 or \$15 a month.

Life within the group is disciplined. Smoking and drinking are frowned on, as is long hair for men. Premarital sex is strictly taboo. Members do not even decide when or whom they will marry, but leave the decision up to Rev. Moon.

The group forms a new family for members. Moon stands as the benign father,

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EDITORS:

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ohn Nakajima, Jim Stentzel, Lee Seaman

NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL Room 24, 3-18 Nishiwaseda 2-chome Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160 Japan

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loving and above question. Members live and work together as brothers and sisters, and if family quarrels occur, they have not been publicized. Everyone belongs. Everyone has a purpose. Everyone is working for a clear, visible, unquestionably good end -- the unification of the world under God.

"They've got something to live for," commented one Japanese observer. And that "something" appeals to a lot of Japanese young people, especially those living away from home in big cities and disillusioned by their universities or their jobs. Believers number 200,000 in Japan, according to group figures, although other estimates fall under 50,000.

Not surprisingly, the Unification Church is active on college campuses. Movement spokesmen say 140 campus groups are operating now. Many members of the 220 communes across Japan are college students.

College groups operate under a variety of names. "Study of Principles" on a secular campus may become "Bible Research" at a Christian school. Christian colleges like the groups "because they use the word 'Christian,'" a missionary teacher here observes, while administrators across the board applaud the Unification stand against student violence and leftist activities.

A prospective member finds the group warm and accepting. Not only one worker, but several, will devote hours to talking with him. And they also listen. Two or three intent listeners can make a terrific impression, especially on someone searching for value in life. He so obviously matters to these people.

Once involved, the new member finds himself in an atmosphere of intense, concentrated study and work. Members may rise at 6 am, discuss the Bible or the *Divine Principle*, spend ten hours on the streets selling flowers and ginseng tea or talking in train stations, return home at 10 pm for a late supper and study before bed. Who has energy left for asking questions? And besides, with the Second Coming at hand, little points which bother outsiders so much--questions about Moon's money, political activities of the movement, soundness of doctrine--seem picayune. Former SDS members pray for Nixon at the White House and support Korea's President Park Chung Hee. A contradiction? "Only the *Divine Principle* is important."

The movement has many detractors in Japan. Says one American missionary, "Most Japanese don't know much about Christianity. They may have a vague idea that there is some difference between Catholics and Protestants, but that's about all. Now these Unification people start calling themselves Christians and using their high-pressure tactics, and people get the idea that they are representative. They're giving the Christian Church here a bad name."

One young woman told the *Tokyo Shinbun* that she left the group after three years because she was concerned about the mental health of some members. She reported that group pressures were intense, and that those who suffered from psychological breakdowns were not given professional help. Victims were "closed in back rooms" and virtually forgotten by other members, she said. She seems to be the only person so far, however, to bring this charge.

Meanwhile, a medical doctor here warns that some Unification members suffer from malnutrition and generally poor physical condition. Members tend to be young--early 20's--and have little knowledge of or time for proper nutrition. They work hard, eat little and cheaply.

Unification work takes 100% of a devoted member's time. "Our daughter comes home only to get money," one worried Japanese mother comments. "When

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she gets here, she's so tired and hungry. She sleeps like a log and eats like a horse, and wants to sell us things." Many families feel they have completely lost their children.

(The next article will look into where the money comes from--and where it goes.)

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TAIWAN: PRESSURE ON THE CHURCHES

Chiang Kai-shek, whose conversion to Christianity made him the pillar for a generation of anti-communist Christians in the U.S., is dead. With his passing, and with the decline of that generation in the U.S., Taiwanese Christians of all political colorations are experiencing unprecedented pressures from the government of Chiang Ching Kuo.

Reports from Taiwan indicate government fears that Christians, who number 650,000 in a population of 16,000,000, "might be a rallying point for a political movement in this tense and unstable time." As a result the government has taken a number of steps in recent weeks and months:

1) In January the government confiscated more than 2000 Bibles from the Taiwan Bible Society in Taipei. The Bibles--1638 copies of a 1974 New Testament translation and 655 copies of a 1932 complete translation--were printed in romanized Taiwanese (Amoy). The government claims that use of romanized Taiwanese, the only language that many older and rural people can understand "subverts the national language" of Mandarin. The government also suggests that use of romanized Taiwanese could be "politically subversive". As of late April, negotiations between the Bible Society and the Government were stalled; cables of concern for religious freedom are being sent by the NCC of Japan and other bodies overseas.

2) There are indications that the government is not terribly pleased with the work of "so many foreign missionaries" in Taiwan. Some American missionaries are fearful that their visas may not be renewed. Meanwhile the government is quietly spreading rumors that some of the missionaries "may be working for the CIA." There are also reports of growing anti-Americanism among the people, fueled by the "insult" of Agricultural Secretary Butz being the initial U.S. government choice to head the delegation to Chiang Kai-shek's funeral, and by the U.S. "sell-out" of Vietnam.

3) The government is being very careful about encouraging a Billy Graham Crusade scheduled for Taipei this fall. Madame Chiang Kai-shek is honorary chairman of the crusade, which the government would like to exploit as an example of religious freedom. On the other hand, the government is anxious to limit the size of the crusade and has vetoed use of a large outdoor stadium, suggesting that a smaller indoor arena be used instead. Government fears, it is said, are based on the outpouring of Christian protest in Seoul since one million Korean Christians attended Graham's 1973 crusade there. Carl McIntyre, head of the American Council of Churches, also strongly protested the Graham crusade while in Taipei for the Funeral. He said that Graham "is not anti-communist enough."

4) In April the government revoked the legal status for Rev. Moon Sun Myung's Unification Church. The government claimed that the church was undermining the educational system, promoting immoral sexual activities, disrupting family life, and destroying traditional Chinese culture and ethics. Some government officials also believe that Rev. Moon has "some political ambitions in Asia".

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And (5) There are reports that the government has authorized the teaching and practice of transcendental meditation at several college campuses.

The only common denominator in this panoply of government actions is the promotion of Confucian ethics--hierarchical control, obedience and quietude. While Chiang Kai-shek used Christianity to greatly enhance his international position, his son apparently wants to ensure that this doesn't boomerang against his domestic position now. The churches, meanwhile, face a growing threat to religious freedom.

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CATHOLIC PRIEST FORCED TO LEAVE SOUTH KOREA

For the second time in five months, the government of the Republic of Korea has forced an American Christian missionary to leave the country. Father James Sinnott, a 45-year-old Catholic (Maryknoll) priest, left south Korea under government order on April 30. The government had earlier refused to renew his visa for religious mission, a status he had maintained since 1960.

The government rejected his visa renewal on grounds that he was engaged in "unauthorized political activity". In a statement before leaving Seoul for Tokyo, Sinnott said he had come to Korea, and was leaving Korea, "as a missionary, a priest and a preacher of the Word of God.... As a priest and missionary I am bound by a sacred duty to speak out against all forms of evil.... In this I stand with a clear conscience before the Lord who will eventually judge us all."

Sinnott was in Tokyo for three days before continuing on to the U.S. In a May 1 press conference, he said he "had always been neutral" vis a vis the government, but that in early 1974 he became aware that "many Catholic priests were very close to the government and were clearly being manipulated by it." He noted that, last spring when President Park was filling the jails with political prisoners, the ROK government appointed an ambassador to the Vatican, and Korean newspapers showed the ambassador and the Pope warmly embracing in Rome.

Sinnott began protesting not only the church's embrace of the government but also the growing arrests in April, 1974. Sinnott said he wanted to warn Catholics to remain neutral, but that "this was difficult to do until Bishop Tji was arrested last July." Since that time, Sinnott has been seen in the front lines of numerous Catholic demonstrations for prisoner release and for restoration of democracy and human rights.

Sinnott insists that his defense of people's basic rights was not opposition to the Park government. He explained that in Korea he "felt like a drowning man; the government is pushing the church down, and we're struggling to stay alive. Like any drowning person, we shout out."

Since the deportation of the Rev. George Ogle, a United Methodist missionary, on December 14, Sinnott became deeply involved in trying to protect the rights--and the lives--of eight men who had been sentenced to death for their alleged role in a fabricated "communist plot". He also closely identified with *Donga Ilbo* newspaper reporters who were locked out of their offices in March for trying to report the facts of the "plot".

On April 9, the eight men were hanged. "To me as a Christian, this was a reenactment of the death of Jesus Christ," said Sinnott in Tokyo. According to Sinnott, the government told him he could stay in Korea if he would avoid contact with the dead men's wives and with the *Donga Ilbo* reporters. Sinnott

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SINNOTT (cont'd)

told them he could not promise this. When taken in by authorities, Sinnott said he was treated "with kid gloves", but he recounted numerous cases of KCIA and police torture of Korean students. Sinnott said that the repression "is getting worse and worse" and that "we can be sure that more missionaries will be asked to leave."

In a final statement to the Korean people in Seoul, Sinnott said: "It is truly with a sad heart that I have come to this day of my departure from this land and this people I have come to know so intimately and to love with all my heart.... I know that many trials and sufferings await all of you in the future. My pain is that this departure makes it impossible for me to share those sufferings, to lighten those pains and, most of all, to have the opportunity to offer myself in your place should you be faced even with death itself..."

"As one final plea to you all, I plead that all of you, no matter what your state in life, no matter what your position on the grave problems that face Korea today, will extend to one another the hand of reconciliation...and openly discuss the issues that have hurt and torn you apart. I wish with all my heart that Korea and all Koreans be reconciled as one, that each and every crime and sin be forgiven, and that the law of love and unity once again govern this land," he said.

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NEW BOOKS

Circle of Harmony by Kenneth J. Dale is that rare combination--a scholarly work that is also very readable. The author brings perception and insight to his discussion of Rissho Koseikai, one of Japan's fastest-growing Buddhist New Religions." The book is not only of interest to religious scholars, but also makes fascinating reading for anyone interested in the "average people" of contemporary Japan.

The study focuses on *hoza*, the group "counseling sessions" which have fueled Rissho Koseikai's phenomenal growth. Dr. Dale presents his observations from first-hand participation in several groups. He interprets what he saw there in terms of group dynamics, counseling techniques, and differences between Western and Japanese hopes and expectations. He also suggests areas in which *hoza* particularly meets the needs of its members today, in comparison with Christianity.

The final section compares Rissho Koseikai with patterns of the Christian church. The Japanese Christian psychotherapist Susumu Akahoshi contributes one chapter, a comparison of Japanese and Western religious consciousness from a psychoanalytic point of view.

Dr. Dale is a professor of Practical Theology at the Japan Lutheran Theological Seminary in Tokyo. A long-term resident of Japan, he has maintained a close relationship with Rissho Koseikai for the past ten years. Dr. Akahoshi heads the Psychiatric Division of the Ogawa Red Cross Hospital.

Circle of Harmony is published by Seibun-sha (Lutheran Literature Society), 1-1 Ichigaya, Sadohara, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 162. List price ¥1500.

---Lee Seaman---

CHANGE OF ADDRESS: We haven't moved, but the Post Office is reorganizing things. Our new address is as given at the bottom of page 1; it goes into effect in June.

WOMAN REPORTER SPEAKS

In the modern liberation movement women are struggling to develop themselves without losing their unique identity as women, according to *Asahi Shinbun* reporter Yayori Matsui. She presented one of a series of lectures and discussions on women in Japan sponsored by the NCCJ Women's Committee at the Christian Center.

Ms. Matsui, a veteran reporter who has just finished a month-long series on "Women in Japan" for the *Asahi*, spoke of her experiences during news coverage and of her interest in the liberation movement. "When the Women's Liberation movement in the West was introduced to Japan, the press, who are mostly men, saw it only as a subject for jokes and caricature. However, as a woman, I was interested in the issue. I felt there was something important and of value there."

When following up a story on increasing traffic accidents, Ms. Matsui discovered that nearly all the families who had lost a husband/father exist on or below the poverty line. This points to the pitifully low salaries received by middle-aged women working in factories and offices, she said. For middle-aged women forced to work, good jobs in Japan are almost impossible to find, she said. Housewives who do not work may think the inequality in salaries does not apply to them. Indeed, many Japanese women are indifferent to equal pay for women and feel that men supporting families deserve higher salaries. However, if her husband dies or becomes disabled, the most comfortable housewife may find herself among the ranks of underpaid female factory hands.

Women should work for their own liberation, the reporter concluded, but this work should not be only self-centered. Instead, they must strive for solidarity with those who face discrimination in Japanese society and with their sisters in developing countries who suffer under Japanese exploitation.

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CONE SPEAKS ON THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION

Dr. James H. Cone, Black American theologian and standard-bearer for the "Theology of Liberation" movement, arrives in Japan this week for a series of symposiums and lectures. The Union Theological Seminary professor is presently speaking in Tokyo and will travel to Kansai and Kita Kyushu before leaving Japan for Seoul, Korea, on May 22.

Planned activities include public lectures May 12 at the Ichinomiya Public Hall on Human rights and May 19 in Fukuoka on liberation theology. Some of the other activities are also open to the public; a complete schedule is available from Rev. Choi Chung Shik of the Osaka Korean Christian Church (Tel. 067-31-6801) and from the Rev. Glen Davis in Fukuoka (Tel. 092-651-9786).

CORRECTION: A line is missing on page 6 of our April 25 issue. The second full paragraph, first sentence should read, "From the point of view of the opposition parties it can be said that this extended reformist power, helping to elect for the first time a reformist governor in Kanagawa, and saving the seats of the two governors of Tokyo and Osaka." Apologies, all.